

Some tips for making a complaint

What to do if you want to make a complaint



NSW Ombudsman

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Some tips for making a complaint

There is now an expectation in both the public and private sectors that organisations have a complaint handling procedure. So as a general rule, you should make a complaint directly to the organisation concerned to give it the opportunity of addressing your concerns. Apart from resolving your complaint, bringing the matter to the attention of the organisation may result in changes to their policies or procedures that will benefit other members of the community.

A letter is best, but a telephone call may resolve the matter quickly

It is usually best to write a letter of complaint, particularly if you are dealing with a large organisation. If you write, someone will be given the job of answering your letter and it is more likely to be directed to the right area or person.

However, an initial phone call may help clarify some of the issues, or may help you understand the organisation's complaint handling procedure; for example some complaints may require a special form or a statutory declaration. Phoning is also better if you are dealing with a telephone service supplier.

If you do phone, it is best to talk to the person who deals with your type of complaint, as the matter may be able to be resolved immediately. Tell them about your complaint, ask them if they can help and what they intend to do. Always ask for their name and position and keep notes of what was said, as well as the time and date of your phone call.

Telephone complaints can be frustrating. You are not always able to speak to the person directly responsible and calls don't get returned. If nothing happens, it is then difficult to prove that you complained in the first place. So, if there is any doubt about whether your concerns have been properly addressed, write a letter. Even if you are satisfied, it may be best to confirm your understanding of your phone conversation in writing.

Address your letter to the person responsible

You should complain to either the person in the organisation who is responsible for supervising the person or area that you are having trouble with or to the complaint handling officer, if there is one. If you are unable to identify these people, write to the head of the organisation. Make it

clear in your letter that you consider them responsible for the problem and that they must address your concerns. Your letter should be firm but polite.

What to include in your letter

Your letter should be clear and to the point. Summarise in a couple of sentences exactly what your complaint is. Don't tell your life story or go into excessive detail. Your letter should be set out in a logical order and should include:

- relevant dates, places and times
- a description of the incident or problem
- details of any phone conversations and meetings
- any explanations you think are important
- copies of relevant documents.

Tell them what you need

Indicate what action you think should be taken to resolve your problem. Indicate in a polite way that you are giving the person or organisation a chance to fix a mistake or an omission, rather than abusing or blaming them for what happened. That usually encourages people to defend their actions or the actions of their organisation rather than properly address your concerns.

Make sure your demands are not unreasonable. If your request is realistic and within the power of the person you are writing to, you are more likely to resolve your complaint.

You can also ask for details of their complaint handling procedures, which might help.

Ask for action

Always request that your letter or phone call be acknowledged in writing. Ask the organisation for an estimate of how long it will take to deal with your complaint. If there is a degree of urgency involved, let them know and explain why.

Tell them what you will do if the complaint is not resolved

It may be appropriate to tell the person or organisation that if the complaint is not resolved, you will complain to someone else. This may be someone higher in the organisation or an outside body like your local Member of Parliament, the responsible Minister, the Ombudsman or another complaint handling or appeal body.

Keep records

It is important that you keep copies of all letters you send and receive as well as details of all telephone calls as you may need to provide evidence of your dealings with the organisation, particularly if you decide to refer the matter to another agency.

Be persistent

If nothing happens, call the organisation to check on the progress of your complaint. If they are not able to provide you with an update, then write again. Make it clear to the person you speak or write to that the problem will not go away unless it is resolved.

What to do if unsuccessful

If your complaint is not properly resolved, or is not dealt with in a reasonable time, you may want to take it to another agency. The following pages set out the names and addresses of various organisations that deal with complaints. For your ease, we have grouped these organisations according to industry or subject matter.

Discrimination, disability or harassment

Anti-Discrimination Board

Level 4, 175 Castlereagh Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Phone: (02) 9268 5555
Freecall: 1800 670 812 (within NSW)
TTY: (02) 9268 5522
Fax: (02) 9268 5500
Web: www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/adb

Disability Complaints Service

For people with a disability who wish to make a complaint about their rights being infringed.

52 Pitt Street
REDFERN NSW 2016

Phone: (02) 9370 3100
Freecall: 1800 422 015
TTY: (02) 9318 2138
1800 422 016 freecall
Fax: (02) 9318 2172
Web: www.pwd.org.au
Email: pwd@pwd.org.au

Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (CTH)

Level 8, 133 Castlereagh Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

GPO Box 5218
SYDNEY NSW 2001

Phone: 1300 369 711 switch
1300 656 419 complaints

Privacy
hotline: 1300 363 992
TTY: 1800 620 241 freecall
Fax: (02) 9284 9611

Web: www.hreoc.gov.au

National Disability Abuse and Neglect Hotline

Reporting or complaining about the abuse or neglect of a person with a disability at home, in the community, or in any other location.

Locked Bag 2705
STRAWBERRY HILLS NSW 2012

Freecall: 1800 880 052
TTY: 1800 301 130
National relay
service: 1800 555 677
TIS: 131 450

Web: www.disabilityhotline.org

Discrimination, disability or harassment cont'd

Intellectual Disability Rights Service

A community legal centre specialising in legal and rights issues for people with a disability.

2C/199 Regent Street
REDFERN NSW 2016

Phone: (02) 9318 0144
Freecall: 1800 666 611
Helpline: 1300 665 908
Fax: (02) 9318 2887

Web: www.idrs.org.au
Email: info@idrs.org.au

Disability Complaints Resolution and Referral Service

For people with a disability who wish to make a complaint about their rights being infringed in a disability employment service or by a disability advocacy service.

Locked Bag 2705
STRAWBERRY HILLS NSW 2012

Phone: (02) 9370 3174
Freecall: 1800 880 052
TTY: 1800 301 130
National relay service: 1800 555 677
Fax: (02) 9318 1372
Web: www.crrs.org.au
Email: crrs@pwd.org.au

Employment

Department of Commerce Office of Industrial Relations

Level 23, McKell Building
2-24 Rawson Place
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Award Inquiry
Service: 131 628
Fax: (02) 9020 4700

Web: www.industrialrelations.nsw.gov.au

Government and Related Employees Appeal Tribunal

Hears and determines appeals against decisions relating to the discipline and promotion of NSW public sector employees.

Level 2, 1 Oxford Street
DARLINGHURST NSW 2010

Phone: (02) 9020 4750
Fax: (02) 9020 4790

Web: www.industrialrelations.nsw.gov.au/great

Transport Appeal Boards

For promotion and disciplinary matters for public sector transport authorities employees.

See above details 'Government and Related Employees Appeal Tribunal'.

Energy and water

WorkCover Authority

For all occupational health and safety, workers compensation and rehabilitation information.

92-100 Donnison Street
GOSFORD NSW 2250

Locked Bag 2906
LISAROW NSW 2252

Phone: (02) 4321 5000

Info
Centre: 131 050

Fax: (02) 4325 4145

Web: www.workcover.nsw.gov.au

Email: contact@workcover.nsw.gov.au

Energy and Water Ombudsman

Level 10, 323 Castlereagh Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

PO Box K1343
HAYMARKET NSW 1239

Phone: (02) 8218 5250

Freecall: 1800 246 545

Freefax: 1800 812 291

Web: www.ewon.com.au

Email: omb@ewon.com.au

Freedom of Information

Your complaint should be made to the FOI Officer at the authority concerned.

Commonwealth Ombudsman

See details under 'Government departments'.

NSW Ombudsman

See details on the back of this publication.

Administrative Decisions Tribunal

The main role of the ADT is to review administrative decisions regarding Freedom of Information, adoption, community and disability services, hearing complaints of discrimination, vilification, harassment and victimisation, hearing certain types of professional misconduct cases against solicitors or barristers and hearing retail lease claims.

Level 15, 111 Elizabeth Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

DX 1523 Sydney

Phone: (02) 9223 4677

Freecall: 1800 060 410

TTY: (02) 9235 2674

Fax: (02) 9233 3283

Web: www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/adt

Email: ag-adt@agd.nsw.gov.au

Government departments or public servants

Federal Government

Commonwealth Ombudsman

Level 7, North Wing, Sydney Central
477 Pitt Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

GPO Box K825
HAYMARKET NSW 1240

Phone: (02) 9218 3000
1300 362 072 (cost of a local call)

Fax: (02) 9211 4402

Web: www.comb.gov.au

Email: ombudsman@ombudsman.gov.au

Your Federal Member of Parliament

See entry under 'Commonwealth Parliamentary Offices' in the telephone directory.

Web: www.aph.gov.au

NSW State Government

Your State Member of Parliament

See entry under 'Parliament of NSW' in the telephone directory.

Web: www.parliament.nsw.gov.au

NSW State Government cont'd

Commission for Children and Young People

Looks after the interests of children and young people. Also coordinates employment screening with respect to child related employment.

Level 2, 407 Elizabeth Street
SURRY HILLS NSW 2010

Phone: (02) 9286 7276
Fax: (02) 9286 7267
TTY: (02) 9286 7286

Web: www.kids.nsw.gov.au
Email: kids@kids.nsw.gov.au

Department of Community Services

4-6 Cavill Avenue
ASHFIELD NSW 2131

Locked Bag 4028
ASHFIELD NSW 2131

Phone: (02) 9716 2222
Freecall: 1800 000 164
Helpline: 132 111
Fax: (02) 9717 2999

Web: www.community.nsw.gov.au
Email: client.feedback@community.nsw.gov.au

Independent Commission Against Corruption

Level 21, 133 Castlereagh Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

GPO Box 500
SYDNEY NSW 2001

Phone: (02) 8281 5999
Freecall: 1800 463 909
Fax: (02) 9264 5364
TTY: (02) 8281 5773

Web: www.icac.nsw.gov.au
Email: icac@icac.nsw.gov.au

NSW Ombudsman

See details on the back of this publication.

Department of Local Government

Contact the Investigations and Review Unit.

Level 2, 5 O'Keefe Avenue
NOWRA NSW 2541

Locked Bag 3015
NOWRA NSW 2541

Phone: (02) 4428 4100
TTY: (02) 4428 4209
Fax: (02) 4428 4199

Web: www.dlg.nsw.gov.au
Email: dlg@dlg.nsw.gov.au

Legal matters

Lawyers and Solicitors

Office of the Legal Services Commissioner

Please ring the inquiry line for advice
before submitting a written complaint.

Level 9, 75 Castlereagh Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

GPO Box 4460
SYDNEY NSW 2001

DX 359 Sydney

Phone: (02) 9377 1800

Freecall: 1800 242 958

Fax: (02) 9377 1888

TTY: (02) 9377 1855

Web: www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/olsc

Email: olsc@agd.nsw.gov.au

State Court Judges, Magistrates or Judicial Officers

The Judicial Commission of NSW

Level 5, Thakral House
301 George Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

GPO Box 3634
SYDNEY NSW 2001

DX 886 Sydney

Phone: (02) 9299 4421

Fax: (02) 9290 3194

Web: www.judcom.nsw.gov.au

Email: judcom@judcom.nsw.gov.au

Media

Print Media

The Australian Press Council

For articles or editorial in the print media.

Suite 10.02
117 York Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Phone: (02) 9261 1930
Freecall: 1800 025 712
Fax: (02) 9267 6826

Web: www.presscouncil.org.au
Email: info@presscouncil.org.au
Email: complaints@presscouncil.org.au

Television and Radio

Australian Communications and Media Authority

For unresolved complaints and breaches of the *Broadcasting Services Act 1992*.

Level 15, Tower 1, Darling park
201 Sussex Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

PO Box Q500
Queen Victoria Building
NSW 1230

Phone: (02) 9334 7700
Fax: (02) 9334 7799

Web: www.acma.gov.au
Email: info@acma.gov.au

ABC Audience & Consumer Affairs

For ABC television or radio.

GPO Box 9994
SYDNEY NSW 2001

Phone: (02) 8333 1500
139 994
Fax: (02) 8333 5439
Web: www.abc.net.au

Independent Complaints Review Panel

For complaints related to serious bias, lack of balance or unfair treatment in an ABC broadcast.

GPO Box 688
SYDNEY NSW 1585

Phone: (02) 8333 5639
Web: www.abc.net.au

Special Broadcasting Service

For SBS television or radio.

14 Herbert Street
ARTARMON NSW 2064

Locked Bag 28
CROWS NEST NSW 1585

Phone: (02) 9430 2828
Freecall: 1800 500 727

Web: www.sbs.com.au
Email: comments@sbs.com.au

Personal matters

Health Care Complaints Commission

Doctors, other health care providers, hospitals or health services.

Level 13, 323 Castlereagh Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Locked Bag 18
STRAWBERRY HILLS NSW 2012

DX 11617 Sydney Downtown

Phone: (02) 9219 7444

Freecall: 1800 043 159

Fax: (02) 9281 4585

TTY: (02) 9219 7555

Web: www.hccc.nsw.gov.au

Email: hccc@hccc.nsw.gov.au

Real estate agents or landlords and builders

Department of Commerce Office of Fair Trading

1 Fitzwilliam Street
PARRAMATTA NSW 2150

PO Box 972
PARRAMATTA NSW 2150

Phone: (02) 9895 0111

Enquiries: 133 220

Fax: (02) 9895 0222

TTY: 1300 723 404

Web: www.fairtrading.nsw.gov.au

Email: enquiry@oft.commerce.nsw.gov.au

Advisory centres at Albury, Armidale, Blacktown, Bathurst, Broken Hill, Coffs Harbour, Dubbo, Gosford, Goulburn, Grafton, Hurstville, Lismore, Liverpool, Newcastle, Orange, Parramatta, Penrith, Port Macquarie, Queanbeyan, Tamworth, Tweed Heads, Wagga Wagga and Wollongong.

Police

Commonwealth Ombudsman

For complaints about Federal Police.

See details under 'Government departments'.

NSW Ombudsman

See details on the back of this publication.

Police Integrity Commission

For complaints about serious police corruption and misconduct

Level 3, 111 Elizabeth Street
SYDNEY NSW 2999

GPO Box 3880
SYDNEY NSW 2001

Phone: (02) 9321 6700
Freecall: 1800 657 079
Fax: (02) 9321 6799

Web: www.pic.nsw.gov.au
Email: contactus@pic.nsw.gov.au

Privacy matters

Federal Privacy Commissioner

GPO Box 5218
SYDNEY NSW 2001

Phone: 1300 363 992
Fax: (02) 9284 9666
TTY: 1800 620 241

Web: www.privacy.gov.au
Email: privacy@privacy.gov.au

Privacy NSW

160 Marsden Street
PARRAMATTA NSW 2150

Locked Bag 5111
PARRAMATTA NSW 2124

Phone: (02) 8688-8585
Fax: (02) 8688-9660

Web: www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/privacynsw
Email: privacy_nsw@agd.nsw.gov.au

Private business matters

Financial Ombudsman Service

The Banking and Financial Services Ombudsman (BFSO), Financial Industry Complaints Service (FICS) and Insurance Ombudsman Service (IOS) merged to form the national Financial Ombudsman Service (FOS). FOS has three divisions corresponding to the old merged schemes as follows:

- Banking & Finance Division,
- Investments, Life Insurance and Superannuation Division
- General Insurance Division

GPO Box 3
MELBOURNE VIC 3001

Phone: 1300 780 808 (cost of a local call)

Fax: (03) 9613 6399

Web: www.fos.org.au

Email: info@fos.org.au

Private Health Insurance Ombudsman

Level 7, 362 Kent Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Phone: (02) 8235 8777

Freecall: 1800 640 695

Fax: (02) 8235 8778

TTY: 132 544

TIS: 131 450

Web: www.phio.org.au

Email: info@phio.org.au

Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman

PO Box 276
Collins Street West
MELBOURNE VIC 8007

Phone: (03) 8600 8700
Freecall: 1800 062 058
Freefax 1800 630 614
TTY: 1800 675 692
TIS: 131 450

Web: www.tio.com.au
Email: tio@tio.com.au

Contact details

Level 24, 580 George Street
Sydney NSW 2000

If you wish to visit us, we prefer you make an appointment.
Please call us first to ensure your complaint is within our
jurisdiction and our staff are available to see you.

Our business hours are:
Monday to Friday, 9am–5pm
(Inquiries section closes at 4pm)

Telephone Interpreter Service (TIS): 131 450
We can arrange an interpreter through TIS
or you can contact TIS yourself before speaking to us.

General inquiries: 02 9286 1000

Toll free (outside Sydney metro): 1800 451 524

Tel. typewriter (TTY): 02 9264 8050

Facsimile: 02 9283 2911

Email: nswombo@ombo.nsw.gov.au

Web: www.ombo.nsw.gov.au

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